

Finance Committee Public Hearing
Minutes of February 1, 2016
FINAL

The Finance Committee met Monday evening at 7:00 pm on February 1, 2016, at the Town House Hearing Room, Concord, Massachusetts. Notice of the meeting was duly filed with the Town Clerk, Town of Concord, Massachusetts.

Members present: Terri Ackerman, Richard Giles, Richard Jamison, Paul McGinn, Linda Miller, Pat Nelson, Karle Packard, Scott Randall, Wendy Rovelli, June Rzepczynski Phil Swain, Tom Tarpey and Triveni Upadhyay.

Members absent: Daniel Cassidy, and Mark Garvey.

Also present: Nancy Beeuwkes; Reiner Beeuwkes, Chair, Tax Fairness Committee; Alan Cathcart, Superintendent, Water and Sewer Department; Dan Conti, Concord School Committee; Nancy Crowley, Personnel Board; Sean Dugan, Public Information Officer; Lisa Fitzgibbons, Mothers Out Front; Amy Foley, Director, Human Resources; Johanna Glazer, Town Meeting Procedure Resource Person; Bob Grom; Mark Hanson; Jon Harris, Budget and Purchasing Administrator; Jane Hotchkiss, Select Board; Mark Howell, Chief Information Officer; Wally Johnston, Chair, Concord Public School Committee; Alice Kaufman, Chair, Select Board; Ruth Lauer, Administrative Assistant to Select Board; Michael Lawson, Select Board; Tony Logalbo, Finance Director; Steven Ng, Select Board; Dee Ortner; Carmin Reiss, Select Board; Marcia Rasmussen, Director, Planning Division; Rich Reine, Director, Concord Public Works; Bill Renault, Town Engineer; Janet Rothrock, Finance Committee Recorder; Dan Rowley, Highway & Grounds Superintendent; Henry Schwann, Reporter, Concord Journal; Anita Tekle, Town Clerk; Eric Van Loon, Town Moderator; Chris Whelan, Town Manager; Rebecca Woodward, Mothers Out Front; and members of Town committees and of the public.

Town Budgets and Articles:

Chair Giles called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He welcomed the public and thanked CCTV for recording and broadcasting the hearing.

Mr. Giles explained that the purpose of the hearing was informational in nature and an opportunity to debate the pros and cons of the articles. He encouraged participants to make comments and ask questions as well as make suggestions that would strengthen the presentations at Town Meeting. He urged those at home to participate by emailing questions to public-hearing@concordma.gov

Mr. Giles presented a general budget overview for FY17:

The Guideline Recommendations completed in November 2015 call for an FY17 operating budget increase of 3.31%. The Select Board, Concord Public School Committee (CPS) and the Concord Carlisle Regional School District Committee (CCRS) budgets are supporting budget recommendations consistent with this guideline. The Finance Committee has a stated goal to keep town-wide overall tax increases under 4%. Free Cash as of June 30, 2015 is expected to be certified at approximately

\$11,057,869 (equal to 11.5% of the FY16 Total Budget). The FY17 operating budget increase is less than the FY16 and FY15 operating budget increases.

Article 16: By Petition – Reconsidering the School Bus Terminal Location – Mr. Hanson made a short presentation on this article which may not be moved at Town Meeting. If buses are parked closer to the high school it costs less to run the transportation operation. The proposed Knox Trail location is closer and therefore better than the current Acton location but parking the buses on or near the Concord-Carlisle High School (CCHS) campus would be even better. Mr. Hanson estimates that over 10 years it will cost \$6,800,000 more to park the buses at the Knox Trail location than at CCHS and \$12,800,000 more to park them in Acton than at CCHS. Further, if the bus fleet is changed from diesel to electric two of the main objections to locating the buses on the CCHS campus, excess noise and smell, would, in his opinion, no longer be issues. Locating buses on the CCHS campus would require a variance because the campus is in a water conservancy district.

Article 3: Meeting Procedure – Mr. Logalbo – This article establishes procedures designed to ensure that town meeting actions on all money articles keep the property tax levy within the Proposition 2 ½ limits. It has been a routine vote of Town Meeting for more than twenty years.

Article 4: Ratify Personnel Board Classification Actions – Ms. Crowley presented several changes in job classifications which are designed to reflect changes in job content and to ease the difficulty in filling specialized positions. .

Article 5, Personnel Bylaw Amendments – Ms. Crowley presented some personnel bylaw amendments that apply to Concord's approximately 150 non-union employees. Some duties are proposed to be transferred from the Personnel Board to the Town Manager: job descriptions, pay policies, and sick leave.

Article 6: Classification & Compensation Plan for Regular-Status Positions – Ms. Crowley presented the proposed alterations to salary ranges at July 1, 2016. .

Article 7: Town Budget – Mr. Whelan presented the FY17 Town Operating budget of \$22,014,013 which is \$800,000 (3.8%) more than the FY16 budget, in accordance with the Finance Committee's guidelines. \$560,000 of the total increase is allocated to salary increases.

Article 8: Home Rule Petition to Establish a Concord Senior Means-Tested Property Tax Exemption – Mr. Beeuwkes, representing the Tax Fairness Committee established by the Select Board, proposed an age and means tested property tax reduction Home Rule petition modeled after Sudbury's which has been in place for a couple of years and has been successful. This petition requires state legislation. The purpose of the article is to preserve the character of Concord. The Tax Fairness Committee reports that US Census Bureau data shows that 2/5 of Concord households have incomes over \$200,000 but 1/5 have incomes of less than \$50,000 and 1/8 have incomes of less than \$25,000. The Committee estimates that this tax exemption would apply to about 125 households; most of these are elderly women living alone. The maximum tax reduction would be 50% of the tax bill and the median Town tax rate would increase about 0.5%. If approved by the Town Meeting, the measure would go to the state legislature for approval and then come

back to Concord for Town Meeting approval and a town-wide ballot vote. There is a wealth test which would be the responsibility of the Board of Assessors to administer. To qualify, at least one resident of the household must be over age 65.

Article 9: Close Elementary School Debt Stabilization Fund – Mr. Logalbo said \$1,914.33 remains and should be directed to the General Stabilization Fund.

Article 10: PEG Access and Cable-Related Fund – Mr. Whelan said the article allocates \$560,000 from Comcast payments made to the Town pursuant to the licensing agreement and dedicated for Public Educational and Governmental (PEG) access TV which in Concord is contracted by the Town to CCTV. Funds can be used for operational or capital purposes and funds unused at the end of the year remain in the account and can be used the following year.

Article 19: Free Cash Use - Mr. Logalbo explained that the Finance Committee's policy is to maintain a Free Cash amount of no less than 5% of the total budget. More recently the Finance Committee has supported maintaining a minimum 10% balance largely to support the Town's credit rating. For FY17, \$1,000,000 is proposed by the Finance Committee to be allocated from Free Cash to support the operating budget.

Article 21: Outdoor Recreation Facilities – Emerson Track – Mr. Whelan said that this article will probably not be moved because Middlesex School has offered to contribute \$50,000 now and another \$50,000 after July 1st to the renovation of the Emerson track.

Article 22: Municipal Building Renovations – Mr. Whelan presented this article which calls for \$200,000 for repairs to the Harvey Wheeler roof and the Hunt Gym HVAC system.

Article 23: Land Acquisition – Ball's Hill Road – Mr. Whelan described 80 acres at the end of Ball's Hill Road both for open space and to protect an existing parcel owned by the town for a future well site. Concord already owns 17 acres adjacent to the 80 acres parcel. The 80-acre parcel original price of \$6,900,000 has been discounted by the owner to \$6,400,000. It is assessed at \$6,800,000. The Town would fund \$2,000,000 of the purchase and the Article seeks \$1,600,000 in borrowing authorization (half supported from the General Fund and half from the Water Fund) with the balance to be obtained from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) funds. The rest of the purchase price would need to be raised privately through the Concord Land Conservation Trust and individual donors. The 80 acres is a high priority site in the current Long Range Open Space Plan.

Article 24: Public Safety Equipment – Mr. Whelan presented – The Town seeks \$150,000 to refurbish a fire engine. Concord routinely refurbishes its fire engines half way through their expected period of service.

Article 25: Cemetery Roadway Infrastructure and Drainage Improvements – Mr. Rowley presented – The Highway and Grounds Department seeks \$150,000 from Town Meeting along with CPC funds for renovation of roads, retaining walls, and drainage work in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. The total estimate for the project is about \$1,000,000 and it will be accomplished in at least two phases over a period of years.

Article 26: 2016 Road Program – Mr. Renault presented – the Article seeks a borrowing authorization of \$1,350,000 for road repair, including repairs to town public parking areas.

Article 27: Road Repair Revolving Fund Expenditures - Mr. Reine presented – this Article provides that \$140,000 from road cut permits and other related fees be expended for road repair.

Article 28: Nagog Pond Water Treatment Facility, Intake Piping and Reservoir Improvements - Mr. Cathcart explained the components of the project: a water treatment plant at Nagog Pond, replacing the 16” 1909-installed Nagog Pond intake pipe, and renovations to the Annursnac Hill reservoir and to the Pine Hill reservoir. The Nagog Pond facility can supply up to 1,500,000 gallons/day. Concord has been using the Nagog Pond surface water supply under a waiver and now needs to build a filtration plant.

Article 31: Regional Housing Services Revolving Fund Expenditures – Mr. Whelan asks that \$200,000 in funds paid by member towns to the Housing Services Revolving Fund be authorized for expenditure.

Article 46: By Petition – Request to Create a Net Zero Greenhouse Gas Emissions Goal, Task Force, Funding & Plan – Ms. Woodward of Mothers Out Front presented. Passage of this article would create a task force to set goals to achieve net zero carbon emissions within 25 years. Additionally, the article calls for \$85,000 to be expended under the direction of the Town Manager for a consultant or other services to develop goals, facilitate stakeholder sessions, prepare a timeline, and provide specific action recommendations.

Article 49: Unpaid Bills – will not be moved.

Article 50: Debt Rescission – Mr. Logalbo – The Town will vote whether to rescind unused borrowing authorizations totaling \$640,000.

Article 57: Bruce Freeman Rail Trail – Phase 2B – Mr. Whelan – The Town Manager seeks \$250,000 to complete the Phase 2B design and engineering for the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

Mr. Giles adjourned the Public Hearing at 10:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Karle Packard, Clerk